



# Reforming Teacher Education

## Spotlight on California State University, Northridge

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In summer 2001, the Carnegie Corporation of New York launched an ambitious initiative, Teachers for a New Era (TNE), to fundamentally reform teacher preparation in the United States. The foundation was persuaded to do so by a growing body of evidence showing that teachers have discernible, differential effects on student achievement and that those effects appear to persist across years. The aim of this initiative is to stimulate development of excellent teacher education programs that are guided by a respect for evidence, are based on close collaboration between education and arts and sciences faculty, and provide strong clinical training and support. These principles have been espoused by other reform efforts, but TNE differs from those past efforts in two important ways: (1) It explicitly requires that teacher education programs base continuous improvement efforts on evidence of the “value added” that their teaching graduates bring to the classroom in terms of gains in student achievement, and (2) it requires that both teacher education and arts and sciences faculty members provide support to their new education graduates during a two-year “induction period.”<sup>1</sup>

Four institutions—Bank Street College of Education in New York City; California State University, Northridge (CSUN); Michigan State University; and the University of Virginia—were selected in summer 2002 as the first TNE sites. Those schools are each receiving \$5 million over a period of five years and technical assistance to reform their teacher education programs to align with TNE principles.

<sup>1</sup> *Induction* is professional support provided to new teachers, typically in the first two years of teaching. TNE requires that colleges and universities provide such support on an ongoing basis to their education students after graduation. Many states and districts also have teacher-induction programs to support the new teachers in their regions.

### Abstract

At the request of the Rockefeller Foundation, RAND and MRDC are jointly conducting a national evaluation of Teachers for a New Era, an ambitious attempt to reform teacher education. A new report examines first-year implementation of the initiative in the initial four program sites, one of which is California State University, Northridge. This research brief focuses on first-year implementation and underscores the role of a supportive state policy environment in advancing the goals of this reform.

The Rockefeller Foundation retained the RAND Corporation and Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation (MRDC) to jointly conduct a national evaluation of the TNE initiative as it is being implemented by the first four grantees. A new RAND report, *Reforming Teacher Education: A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era*, offers a look at first-year implementation of the initiative. This research brief focuses on first-year implementation of TNE at CSUN and discusses the implications of the state policy environment for TNE. (Information on obtaining other RAND publications on this initiative appears at the bottom of page two.)

### California State University, Northridge, and TNE

Currently, the State of California employs more than 300,000 teachers and certifies approximately 20,000 new teachers each year. California State University, Northridge is the largest producer of new teachers among public institutions in California. It issues more than 1,500 initial teaching credentials a year, almost half of which are awarded to minority candidates. CSUN offers both under-

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graduate teacher education programs (offered jointly by its College of Education and its arts and sciences colleges) and several different post-baccalaureate teacher education programs.

During the first year of TNE, 83 education, arts and sciences, and kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) faculty members participated in the implementation of TNE. As part of the effort to develop evidence regarding the effectiveness of CSUN’s various teacher education programs, TNE participants are examining how the skills and knowledge of teacher candidates are measured at transition points within the programs and how this information can be used for program improvement. In addition, the College of Education is developing an integrated database to track the progress of its students and graduates.

Another major effort by TNE participants has been to design a “value-added” assessment model for documenting the learning gains achieved by pupils who are taught by CSUN graduates. As part of this effort, CSUN is collaborating with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the California State University Chancellor’s Office to link student data with teacher data to assess the effectiveness of its graduates in producing improved student learning.

Also in collaboration with LAUSD, CSUN implemented a program in which exemplary K–12 teachers are appointed as university faculty working with TNE to help improve the university’s teacher education program. CSUN appointed two teachers-in-residence from LAUSD in the first year of TNE.

### **State Policy Environments Have Important Implications for TNE Implementation**

The TNE initiative is meant to spur innovative, out-of-the-box thinking from the selected educational institutions. However, these institutions must comply with state policies and regulations, which could either support or inhibit their ability to substantially reform their teacher education programs.

States can help to support the reform effort. For example, to produce evidence on the effectiveness of their graduates in improving student learning, the TNE sites must be able to track their

teacher graduates and to link student test score data with teacher data. Graduates teach in a variety of districts and states. As a result, obtaining these data is likely to be time consuming and expensive. Given the states’ concerns about teacher supply, retention, and quality, it may be more efficient, and in the states’ best interests, for each state to centralize its data collection effort and to provide TNE sites with access to the data as needed.

Under TNE, the sites are developing innovative ideas on how best to educate future teachers about content and teaching practices. However, this effort must be done within the context of state standards for teacher education, which may include specific course requirements and caps on the number of allowable credits for teacher education. TNE sites may need some flexibility to experiment with and test novel approaches to teacher education, which could benefit teacher education more broadly.

Induction is an area in which the sites must coordinate their TNE programs with state-mandated or district-run programs. For example, California now requires that teachers go through an induction program (offered free by the district) or complete a fifth-year program (which incurs out-of-pocket expenses) to obtain a “professional clear” credential. CSUN will need to position its TNE induction activities within this context, and new teachers who are already overburdened may feel that they do not have the time (or money) to participate in the TNE induction program. Given the number of requirements that new teachers must satisfy under the new teacher credentialing standards, CSUN has been presented with an interesting challenge in also meeting the expectations of the Teachers for a New Era initiative.

Like many states, California is facing lagging revenues and has reduced its funding to institutions of higher education. The California State University System budget was reduced by 7 percent in 2003–2004. While CSUN has shielded its teacher education programs from funding cuts, it is uncertain whether the university can continue to do so if there are further reductions in state funding. The funding situation will have implications for CSUN’s ability to undertake the work required for TNE and teacher education more broadly. ■

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This research brief describes work done for RAND Education documented in *Reforming Teacher Education: A First Year Progress Report on Teachers for a New Era* by Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Scott Naftel, Heather Barney, Hilary Darilek, Frederick Doolittle, and Joseph Cordes, TR-149-EDU, 2004, 172 pages, \$30, available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/TR/TR149/>. A research brief on the overall report is available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9063/>. Research briefs on the other three sites featured in the report are available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9059/>, <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9061/>, and <http://www.rand.org/publications/RB/RB9062/>. These documents are also available from RAND Distribution Services (phone: 310-451-7002; toll free: 877-584-8642; or email: [order@rand.org](mailto:order@rand.org)). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.



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